

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Bearing in mind that natural disasters affect human lives and living conditions thereafter, and often have a more direct and adverse impact on women, as well as vulnerable people within groups such as children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and that natural disasters often have different impacts on men and women in regards to the associated risks and vulnerabilities, due to gender inequality, gender stereotypes and discrimination against women, including the lack of equal access to adequate information, economic opportunities, and poverty and social exclusion, safety and different family responsibilities,

Reaffirming the commitments regarding women and girls affected by natural disasters in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and reaffirming also that the outcome document stressed the need to incorporate a gender perspective in disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery strategies,

Recalling also the agreed conclusions of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women of 15 March 2002, Commission on the Status of Women resolutions 49/5 of 11 March 2005 as well as 55/1 of 4 March 2011 on 'Mainstreaming gender equality and promoting empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies', the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction which was held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005, as well as all the relevant General Assembly resolutions including A/RES/66/9 and A/RES/66/120,

Welcoming the response of the affected countries as well as the support and assistance given by the international community in the relief and recovery efforts for natural disasters in all parts of the world, including the devastating earthquake that struck eastern Japan on 11 March 2011, and other recent natural disasters, including those addressed in recent humanitarian appeals, while stressing the importance of further efforts in these responses, including in gender-responsive disaster management,

Stressing the importance of taking equally into account the specific needs of

women, as well as vulnerable people within groups such as children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, in every phase of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, ensuring their equal opportunities for participation in these processes, calling for a people-centered, holistic approach, in order to build an inclusive society, supported by a social bond among the people through community-based approaches, which promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women, strengthens the resilience of the communities and reduces social vulnerabilities for disasters,

1. Recognizes that women play a vital role in disaster risk reduction (prevention, mitigation and preparedness), response and recovery, including rehabilitation and reconstruction, and the need to enhance women's capacities to respond to disasters, in order to, inter alia, enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women,

2. Urges Governments and, where appropriate, United Nations entities, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, and private sector, and other stakeholders to:

(a) Review national policies, strategies and plans and take action to integrate a gender perspective in policies, planning and funding for disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, considering the different impacts that natural disasters have on women and men,

(b) Ensure the equal opportunities for participation of women in decision-making including with regard to the allocation of resources at all levels regarding disaster risk reduction, response and recovery,

(c) Strengthen the capacities of relevant authorities and institutions at all levels to apply a gender-sensitive approach to disaster risk reduction (prevention, mitigation and preparedness), response and recovery, while raising their awareness, and promote cooperation among them,

(d) Ensure the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights in every phase of disaster risk reduction (prevention, mitigation and preparedness), response and recovery,

(e) Make the utmost efforts to secure equal access to disaster relief assistance

between women and men and provide disaster response and support for recovery that is fully responsive to the needs, views and enjoyment of all human rights of women with special attention paid to the needs of pregnant and lactating women, families with infants, single-headed households and widows, such as in the context of the provision of food and supplies, water and sanitation, the set-up and management of shelter, safety and security, and the provision of physical, psychological, and emergency health care, including for sexual and reproductive health, and counseling services, while encouraging the involvement of female professionals and gender-balance among field workers,

(f) Ensure that in post-disaster environments, special attention is given to sexual and gender-based violence and to the prevention of various forms of exploitation, including the risk of trafficking and the particular vulnerability of girls, unaccompanied children and orphans,

(g) Also ensure, in post-disaster environments, the protection of and care and support to the victims of violence and, as appropriate, the provision of legal and other relevant services for victims of violence to aid in the, inter alia, investigation and the prosecution of sexual and gender based violence, taking into account women's needs in order to avoid the re-victimization of women,

(h) Design, implement, and evaluate gender-sensitive economic relief and recovery projects, including vocational and technical skills training measures in order to help ensure equal economic opportunities between men and women, paying attention to eliminating obstacles to women's rapid integration or reintegration into the formal employment sector, owing to their role in the social and economic process, and taking into account the rural and urban migration that natural disasters may provoke,

(i) Promote income-generating activities and employment opportunities for women affected by natural disasters, particularly rural women, including through supporting the community-based businesses, the establishment of necessary social services, and access to market, credit and other financial services,

(j) Ensure women and men's equal access to natural-hazard early warning systems and promote disaster risk reduction planning, taking into account of the specific needs, and views and all human rights of women and men, and raise public awareness and

provide training at all levels on gender-sensitive approaches to disaster risk reduction, including in the areas of science and technology,

(k) Ensure women and girls' equal access to and use of information, training, and formal and non-formal education on disaster risk reduction, in order for women and girls to fully use these resources,

(l) Systematically collect demographic and socio-economic data and information disaggregated by sex, age and disability and continue to develop gender indicators and analyze gender differences, including through gender-sensitive needs assessment and planning processes, and integrate this information into disaster risk reduction and management policies and programs,

(m) Document and assess disaster responses from a gender perspective, and widely disseminate, both nationally, regionally and internationally, information on good practices, lessons learned and tools, including technologies in support of disaster risk reduction, in order to promote and ensure their integration into disaster risk reduction planning,

(n) Recognize and further promote the role of civil society, including community-based organizations, women's organizations and volunteers, in disaster management and in promoting the building of an inclusive, disaster-resilient society that ensures women's full participation,

(o) Recognize also the important role played by female professionals and volunteers, inter alia, in meeting women's needs and further encourage their participation in disaster risk reduction, including prevention, mitigation and preparedness, response and recovery,

(p) Forge constructive partnership among all stakeholders, including Governments, United Nations entities and other relevant actors such as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector in order to strengthen gender perspective in all aspects of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery,

3. Encourages Governments, local authorities, the United Nations system, regional organizations, and invites donors and other assisting countries to address the

vulnerabilities and capacities of women and girls through gender-responsive programming and the allocation of resources in their disaster risk reduction, response and recovery efforts in coordination with the Governments of affected countries,

4. Requests all relevant United Nations entities, according to their mandate, to ensure that a gender perspective continues to be mainstreamed into all aspects of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery,

5. Also requests the United Nations system, member states and other stakeholders to continue to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in its activities on disaster risk reduction, including at the third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015,

6. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution, including suggestions on how to further address the issue on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters within the existing UN framework.